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ON PAGE A-10

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## Cuba Directs Salvador Insurgency, Former Guerrilla Lieutenant Says

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WASHINGTON, July 27 — A former Salvadoran guerrilla who played a key role in anti-Government raids in San Salvador has told United States officials that Cuba has "directed the activities" of the insurgency since 1980 and that the guerrilla leadership is now operating from bases in Nicaragua.

The former rebel, Arquímedes Canadas, also known as Comandante Alejandro Montenegro, said in an interview here that before 1980 the guerrilla movement was largely "nationalistic," made up of a multitude of political and armed groups. But he said it gradually moved under Havana's influence to the point that Cuban military aides specifically advised Salvadoran guerrillas on tactics to cripple Government forces.

Mr. Canadas, who has been sentenced to death by guerrilla forces and is under United States Government protection here, said he and four other leaders of the People's Revolutionary Army met four Cuban military officials, three men and a woman, in Havana and Managua in July and October 1981. At that point Mr. Canadas, the 28-year-old son of a civil servant, was an underground leader in the "central front," which includes San Salvador, the capital.

"As far as the central front was concerned," Mr. Canadas said, "they said the principal activity should be the sabotage of electric power and telephone lines to prevent the national army from using the telephone as a principal means of communication and force them to use only radio."

### Report Has 'Checked Out'

Two State Department officials said Mr. Canadas's background and the details of his report had been checked in recent months by the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency. "His bona fides have been established," an official said. "We have checked what he's said with other sources and it's checked out."

The official said there was special concern in validating the report, given the embarrassment last March when a Nicaraguan publicly recanted statements given to the State Department and the C.I.A. about Nicaraguan and Cuban involvement in El Salvador.

Mr. Canadas was seized last Aug. 22 by Honduran security forces at a cafe in Tegucigalpa while on his way to a meeting of Salvadoran rebel leaders in Managua. Since then he has told his story to United States officials, ranging

from a teen-ager who abhorred what he called the Salvadoran Government's "military repression" to an underground leader who directed one of the guerrilla movement's major propaganda triumphs, the destruction of seven American-made helicopters and eight planes at the Ilopango Air Base near San Salvador in January 1982.

"The seven soldiers that carried out the operation were trained for six months in Havana," Mr. Canadas said. "In October, when I was in Managua, Villalobos had put me in charge of the mission." Joaquín Villalobos leads the People's Revolutionary Army.

### Opposed Cuban Involvement

Although several other guerrilla leaders have been seized and accepted amnesty — and quietly fled to other Latin American countries after privately yielding intelligence information — Mr. Canadas said he had decided to speak publicly for several reasons.

At the time that he drifted into the underground in 1974, after 30 people died when the military opened fire on a peaceful demonstration by students, anti-Government activity was "nationalistic," he said.

"We wanted an end to oppression in our homeland," Mr. Canadas said. "We did not want Communists and Cubans."

Even before his arrest, he said, he had made known his dissatisfaction "that the process was being transformed and manipulated by other interests, the Cubans and Nicaraguans."

"At the moment," he continued, "we should fight for peaceful political alternatives so that the bloodshed will be stopped. I want to take that message and direct it to my ex-companions."

The Salvadoran spoke in Spanish in the interview, held at the Institute on Religion and Democracy, a foundation and church-supported group.

### 'People Closed Their Doors'

Mr. Canadas said he grew aware of Cuba's involvement in mid-1980 when the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front was set up as the umbrella organization for Salvador's guerrilla groups, including the People's Revolutionary Army. Overseeing the front was a supreme executive body, the Unified Revolutionary Directorate, or D.R.U., that was formed, he said, at a secret meeting in Havana.

"From the political and military point of view, all the decisions that the

D.R.U. took — from the strategic sense, from the military sense — were done in coordination with the Cubans," he said.

For example, in November 1980, when guerrilla leaders met in Havana, "the military plan for the final offensive in January '81 was authorized by the Cubans," he said.

That offensive, in which guerrilla forces attacked key points in hopes of a general uprising, fizzled. "There was no popular backing for an insurrection," Mr. Canadas said, adding that the umbrella guerrilla group had "never agreed on a common strategy; there were ideological differences."

He said he was in Soyapango, just east of San Salvador, on Jan. 10 and "the people closed their doors on us."

According to Mr. Canadas, the guerrillas made a crucial mistake in March 1980 when the highly popular Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who had advocated social change, was murdered. "There could have been the insurrection then and there," he said. "The people were waiting for the call." But "the Communists in the movement said wait," he said, adding, "It was a major political error."

By June 1980, Mr. Canadas said, after guerrilla leaders, not including him, went to Havana, "arms began coming in and the commanders after that meeting did not return to Salvador." He said that was when the leaders moved operations to Nicaragua.

"They never returned," he said, "with the exception of Villalobos, who was the last one to leave Salvador in February '81."

"Before that we did not have much arms coming in," he said. "After that the majority of arms was given by Vietnam, American M-16's. The arms came from Vietnam to Havana. Havana to Managua. Managua to Salvador."

Mr. Canadas said that although the guerrillas' umbrella group includes several factions of either nationalist or Communist grouping, it moved into closer alignment with Cuba "because they thought they were going to win militarily; they felt with Cuban aid the success would come more quickly."

Mr. Canadas, a hefty man with an engaging smile, said he now lives in Costa Rica and Panama. He is in Washington for several days and declined to discuss further details about his whereabouts.

On his first visit to Cuba in July 1981, he recalled, he and three other People's Revolutionary Army leaders — Jorge Meléndez of the Morazán area, Juan Ramón Medrano of the "southern front" and Miguel Ramírez of the "western front" — met the four Cubans.

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